

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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Confirmation No.: 3915
First Named Inventor: Robert Marc Zeidman
Examiner: Haq, Naeem U. Art Unit: 3625
Attorney Docket No.: M-16231 US

San Jose, California
August 29, 2006

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APPEAL BRIEF UNDER 37 CFR § 41.37

Dear Sir:

Pursuant to 37 CFR § 41.37, Appellant files this Appeal Brief in support of the Notice of Appeal filed on May 9, 2006.

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I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The inventor, Robert M. Zeidman, is the real party in interest.

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II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There is no other prior or pending appeal, interference, judicial proceeding known to appellant or appellant's legal representative which may be related to, directly affect or be directly affected by, or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

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III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-11 are pending. Claims 1-6 are rejected and appealed. Claims 7-11 are withdrawn.

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IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

Subsequent to the Final Office Action of January 27, 2006, Appellant filed an Amendment on March 20, 2006. In response to the Appellant's Amendment, the Examiner issued an Advisory Action on April 19, 2006 advising that the Examiner has considered Appellant's request for reconsideration.

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V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

Independent Claim 1 recites an apparatus for allowing a seller of items to gather data from e-commerce websites. One embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in Figures 2-4 and described beginning at page 2, line 32 to page 5, line 4, for example. As illustrated in Figure 2, and discussed at page 2, lines 32-35, website server computer 105 is connected to the Internet 103. Server computer 105 includes a database for storing data about previous sales of said items on one or more of the e-commerce websites (e.g., page 3, lines 1-3); database management software is used for maintaining said database. A data gathering software visits e-commerce websites to compile the data about previous sales (e.g., page 2, line 37 to page 3, line 1 and lines 3-7). Application software allows a user to request data about previous sales from the database (Figure 4, beginning at page 4, line 38 to page 5, line 12).

VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

1. The Examiner rejected Claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,484,176 (“Sealand”), in view of Chapter 1 of the book “Database Management Systems,” (“Ramakrishnan”), and further in view of the article “Intelligent Agents: a Primer” (“Searcher”).

2. The Examiner rejected Claims 5-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sealand, in view of Ramakrishnan, and further in view of Searcher and the Examiner’s Official Notice.

VII. ARGUMENT

1. Rejection of Claims 1-4

In the Final Office Action of January 27, 2006, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sealand in view of Ramakrishnan and further in view of Searcher. The Examiner states, in pertinent part:

... The cited prior art does not teach data gathering software that visits the servers to compile said data about previous sales. However, Searcher discloses intelligent agents (i.e. agent software) for searching various websites to obtain data for commercial transactions (page 15, lines 19-22) based on user-specified or agent specified rules (page 5, lines 23-27). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time the invention was made, to incorporate the teachings of Searcher into the invention of the cited prior art. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to do so in order to automate the searching process and make the digital world less overwhelming, as taught by Searcher (page 1; page 3, lines 15-21). ...

In response to the Examiner's rejection, Appellant explained in the Amendment of January 27, 2006 that, as amended, Appellant's Claim 1 recites data gathering software for updating the database in the website server:

1. An apparatus for allowing a seller of items to gather data from e-commerce websites, comprising:

a. a website server computer connected to the Internet, including a database for storing data about previous sales of said items on one or more of the e-commerce websites,

b. database management software for maintaining said database,

- c. data gathering software that visits the e-commerce websites to compile said data about said previous sales, and
- d. application software for allowing a user to request from the database said data about said previous sales.

Appellant further explained that, with data gathering software that is capable of visiting and collecting data from e-commerce websites, the database in the website server provides up-to-date information about even the most recent sales. Appellant then pointed out to the Examiner that, in combining the teachings Sealand and Searcher, the Examiner has disregarded the expressed teachings of Sealand. Specifically, Sealand teaches that its real estate database, whose access is strictly restricted to a specifically qualified group (i.e., real estate and other professionals) under secured conditions, is updated only using information provided by its subscribing individual real estate agencies:

In the residential segment of the real estate industry, computerized real estate information databases, known as multiple listing service (MLS) databases, have become the premier source of centralized real estate listing information. MLS databases enjoy widespread acceptance throughout the industry. Individual real estate agencies subscribe to the MLS and provide information about properties both listed and sold. Access is ordinarily restricted to licensed real estate professionals, appraisers, and lending institutions. ...

In the described embodiment, four preferences need be specified, a Department of Real Estate (DRE) license number 61, a password 62, a phone number 63 and a modem initialization string 64, although other preferences are also feasible. Upon the completion of the specification of preferences, the preferences can be saved by pressing the virtual "Save" button 65 or discarded by pressing the virtual "Cancel" button 66....

(Sealand, at col. 1, lines 15-23 and col. 7, lines 23-27; emphasis added)

Thus, the designer of Sealand's real estate databases deems it necessary for its purpose to restrict both the authority to update the databases and the authority to access the databases. Appellant explained that the Examiner's combination of Sealand's and Searcher's teachings, as quoted above, would require that Sealand's real estate databases be open to accesses by data gathering software, and be allowed to be updated by data gathering software using data collected from rival real estate databases. In other words, the Examiner's combination would require a modification that renders Sealand unsatisfactory for its expressed purpose of strict control in both access and update authorities. Appellant therefore notes that the MPEP, at § 2143.01, concludes from such a result that there is no motivation or suggestion to make the Examiner's combination of teachings:

V. THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION CANNOT RENDER THE PRIOR ART UNSATISFACTORY FOR ITS INTENDED PURPOSE

If proposed modification would render the prior art invention being modified unsatisfactory for its intended purpose, then there is no suggestion or motivation to make the proposed modification. *In re Gordon*, 733 F.2d 900, 221 USPQ 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1984)...

Following the MPEP, Appellant therefore concluded that the Examiner's combination of Sealand's and Searchers teachings fails for lack of suggestion or motivation and thus asked for the Examiner's reconsideration of Claims 1-6.

In response to Appellant's arguments, the Examiner states in the Advisory Action of April 19, 2006:

Applicant's arguments have been considered, but they are not persuasive. Applicant has argued that there is no motivation to combine Searcher with the prior art because the

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prior art (i.e. Sealand) teaches that access to the real estate database is restricted; and, therefore the proposed modification would render the prior art unsatisfactory. The Examiner respectfully disagrees with these arguments. Searcher discloses that an intelligent agent can be programmed to contain sensitive information such as a credit card number (page 1, "Security"). Therefore Searcher's disclosure is consistent with the teachings of prior art. For this reason, the Examiner maintains the art rejection.

Appellant respectfully submits that the Examiner has entirely missed the significance of Sealand's teachings regarding its proprietary database. As explained by Sealand at col. 1, lines 20-23 and at col. 7, lines 20-27, Sealand's purpose is to restrict the information in the database to the qualified group (i.e., the intermediaries in the real estate market), and hence to exclude the information from others:

... Individual real estate agencies subscribe to the MLS and provide information about properties both listed and sold. Access is ordinarily restricted to licensed real estate professionals, appraisers, and lending institutions.

* * *

Referring to FIG. 5, a screen shot of a preferences specification screen 60 generated, by way of example, by the method 41 of FIGS. 4A and 4B is shown. In the described embodiment, four preferences need be specified, a Department of Real Estate (DRE) license number 61, a password 62, a phone number 63 and a modem initialization string 64...

(emphasis added)

In contrast, as recited in the preamble of Appellant's Claim 1, the recited purpose of Appellant's invention is 1 to provide "an apparatus for allowing a seller of items to gather data from e-commerce websites." (emphasis added). In other words, whereas Sealand's purpose is to make the seller get the privileged sales information exclusively through the intermediaries, Appellant's invention enables such information to be made directly available

to the seller. Naturally, Appellant's invention would be detrimental to Sealand's purpose. Thus, the Examiner's proposed modification in his rejection is fundamentally adverse to Sealand's purpose. The Examiner's argument that the intelligent agent may carry sensitive information, such as a credit card number, is therefore totally irrelevant. A credit card number would allow the real estate professional, but still not the seller, to get access to the Sealand database. Therefore, even if Sealand is modified in the manner suggested by the Examiner, the combination would achieve only "an apparatus for allowing an **intermediary** of items to gather data..." " and not "an apparatus for allowing a **seller** of items to gather data from e-commerce websites..." as required in Appellant's Claims 1-4. Accordingly, Appellant respectfully submits that Claims 1-4 are allowable over Sealand, in view of Ramakrishnan and Searcher.

2. Rejection of Claims 5-6

In the Final Office Action of January 27, 2006, the Examiner rejected Claims 5-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sealand, in view of Ramakrisnan and further in view of Searcher and the Examiner's Official Notice. The Examiner states:

Referring to claims 5 and 6: The cited prior art teaches or renders obvious all of the limitations of claims 2 and 3 as noted above. The cited prior art does not expressly disclose establishing a network connection for enabling the agent software to communicate over the Internet with an e-commerce website. However, Official Notice is taken that it is old and well known-in the art to establish a network connection for providing Internet connectivity for any software. Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time the invention was made, to incorporate a network connection for

the agent software in the cited prior art. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to do so in order to allow the agent software to communicate over the Internet.

As explained in Appellant's Amendment of January 27, 2006 and above, the Examiner's combination with respect to Claims 1-4 fails for lack of suggestion or motivation to combine the teachings of Sealand and Searcher. As the Examiner's Official Notice does not cure the failure to suggest or motivate the Examiner's combination of the other prior art, the Examiner's Official Notice is therefore irrelevant. Therefore, as Claims 5-6 each depend from Claim 1, Claims 5-6 are each allowable over the teachings of Sealand, Ramakrisnan and Searcher and the Examiner's Official Notice.

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CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, Appellant submits that all elected claims (i.e., Claims 1-6) are allowable and the Examiner's rejections of these claims should be reversed.

Fee Authorization. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge additional fees or credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 50-2257.

If the Examiner or the Board has any question regarding the above, it is respectfully requested to that the undersigned Attorney for Applicant be telephoned at 408-392-9250.

Respectfully submitted,



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CLAIMS APPENDIX A

1. An apparatus for allowing a seller of items to gather data from e-commerce websites, comprising:
 - a. a website server computer connected to the Internet, including a database for storing data about previous sales of said items on one or more of the e-commerce websites,
 - b. database management software for maintaining said database,
 - c. data gathering software that visits the e-commerce websites to compile said data about said previous sales, and
 - d. application software for allowing a user to request from the database said data about said previous sales.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said data gathering software comprises agent software that, at regular intervals, searches said e-commerce websites to obtain said data about said previous sales.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said data gathering software comprises agent software that, at times determined by a seller, searches said e-commerce websites to obtain said data about said previous sales.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, further including network connection software to enable the application software to communicate over the Internet with a seller at a remote computer.

5. The apparatus of claim 2, further including network connection software to enable the agent software to communicate over the Internet with an e-commerce website.

6. The apparatus of claim 3, further including network connection software to enable the agent software to communicate over the Internet with an e-commerce website.

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EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None.

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RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None.

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